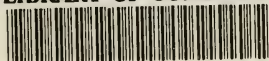


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Review of the Character of Thomas Jefferson

*CHARACTER OF THOMAS JEFFERSON.

IN the work below alluded to, will be found a review of a peculiar character, to say the least of it, upon the recently published Biography of Thomas Jefferson. If one were asked, what object the evangelical critic had in view, it would be difficult to give a satisfactory answer ; if regard were to be had to the character of the Journal, *his* own declarations, and the nature of his performance. It would be easy, *a priori*, to determine what kind of an article a professor of the christian religion, (for such we are informed is the author of the one in question,) would be disposed to produce for insertion in a christian journal, upon the subject of the biography of a distinguished man, like the late President of the United States. One, too, who actually reads the exposition of the Reviewer's intentions, as spread forth with some distinctness in an early stage of his progress, will find as little difficulty in conjecturing what will be the nature of the scrutiny proposed to be instituted ; but, alas ! one who discharges the melancholy task, be it spoken more in sorrow than in sarcasm, of following the author in his observations, will find himself utterly confounded ; if, as has been said, consideration be had, at the same time, to the actual character of the article, the manifesto of the critic's motives, and the peculiar nature of the

* Article No. 1, in the "New-York Review and Quarterly Church Journal," for March, 1837, being a Critique "upon the Life of Thomas Jefferson," by George Tucker, Professor of Moral Philosophy in the University of Virginia.

medium through which one and the other are submitted to the public.

The imagination of a man, like the present writer, impressed with a profound sense of the solemnity and purity of the christian religion, and entertaining the same exalted notion of those who have dedicated themselves to its ministration, would have very little difficulty in following a clergyman, as he retires to his closet, with a book like the Biography of Jefferson, for the purpose of performing that duty in reviewing it, which devolves upon him as the editor or the critic of a religious journal. Looking down from the height—far above the passions and prejudices of worldly men—upon which his holy metier places him; regarding the frailties of the dead with something of the feeling of Sterne's recording angel, he would be distressed, if, in the discharge of his task, he should be obliged to hold them up to the public indignation. Page by page, would he anxiously follow the biographer, in his effort to trace the chequered career of his subject; and when some great thought was chronicled, or some great deed which made an epoch in his life, and his country's life, his bosom would swell with generous pride; while he would not be the less affected with sorrow, when historic truth compelled the recital of his moral imperfections. Conscious how erring must be the nature that required the warning voice from out Sinai's thunders, to keep it in the path of virtue—taught by his own passions how strong is the dominion of the Prince of Evil—a man himself, with all the little foibles of mortality—*homo—humani nihil alieunum**—herald of the great faith which has its *origin in the weaknesses* of our race—he would judge human actions with a humane and saddened spirit. Looking neither to the public nor the private life—leaving the first to history, and the second to his biographer—he would

* Terence.

only regard the character of the published opinions upon the subjects of ethics and christianity. These would be the products of mature thought, and thrown upon the world for consideration. They would be intended to influence the public mind upon these great topics, and it would be but fair that they should be subjected to the ordeal of reason and of argument. Should they be such as were calculated to unsettle the foundations of public morality, or strike at the structure of religion, he, as one of the defenders of these high interests, would be bound to expose their nature, and resist their influence. This done, his obligations as the writer in a critical religious journal would end, and he would lay down his pen, with the consciousness of having done all that could be required of him by the most zealous christian, or the sternest moralist.

Such is the manner and the spirit with which we should think a professor of christianity would notice the biography of a distinguished public man. He *would not* set out with a useless and unfeeling inquiry into the state of public feeling respecting the illustrious dead, and the various mutations which it has undergone, from his appearance upon the world's stage, down to this moment, when the curtain of death has long since removed him from public observation. He would not *profess* to leave to other hands the task of portraying his career as a statesman, and yet under the miserable subterfuge of illustrating his personal character, leave no great political act, or opinion of his life unassailed. He would *not* object to his biographer, that he had written naught save *eulogy*, or elaborate defence of the moral defects of the deceased, and, with a proclaimed design to *correct his partiality*, hunt assiduously through his whole life in search of materials to blacken his reputation, and throw ridicule upon his character. He would *not* abandon, with but one single exception, the only legitimate objects of clerical criticism, and under the magnanimous determination of "stripping no one of their well-

earned laurels to decorate" him whose life was under consideration, leave no effort unmade which the *odium theologicum* could suggest, or critical acumen devise, to destroy his hold upon the affections of his countrymen. He would not pass by, unanswered, the bold doubts upon the subject of the christian revelation, which his biographer says had reached the world *against* his wishes, and yet attempt, by a disingenuous argument, to snatch from his family the consolation solemnly given them before his death, that he belonged to one of the christian denominations. He would *not* publicly acknowledge himself under obligations to the great dead, for services rendered his country in the darkest hour of her history, and yet heap taunt upon taunt, sarcasm upon sarcasm, and argument upon argument, to depreciate the merit of his public acts, and hold him up to this and all coming ages as the great arch demon of infidelity, and the American Machiavel in politics and private life. No! A pious man, a professor of christianity, would not thus treat, one would suppose, the biography of a distinguished patriot. And yet, we confess, with unaffected regret, such seems to be an impartial sketch of the manner in which the Review is executed, which we have found in the March number of the "New-York Review and Quarterly Church Journal."

When we say that we have seen it with regret, we speak of one only of the emotions with which the perusal of it has been accompanied. The others were, astonishment and indignant mortification, that the pages of a journal dedicated to religion, and the pen of a hand consecrated to its holiest offices, should have been thus lamentably prostituted. When will the professors of the meek, forgiving religion of our Saviour properly appreciate the character of the responsibilities they have so solemnly assumed? When the nature of the sacrifices with which they are presumed to have sealed their compact with Him to whose services they

are consecrate? When the feelings, and thoughts, and dispositions, with which they are expected by their great Master to walk through life, in the performance of their vocation? When will they feel that they, the accredited ambassadors from the Great Power on High, are the representatives not only of his sovereignty on earth, but of his divine nature, and as such, false to their high trust, when they mingle in the personal passions and conflicts of those they come among? When will they understand, in all its truth, that they are persons taken from among men, and set apart for high purposes; with nothing to do with this world, but to prepare those who live in it, for translation to another? These are questions which we often ask ourselves, with the profoundest emotion, but we have as yet received no satisfactory answer. Perhaps the fault is ours. We may estimate too highly the capabilities of man—we may have too exalted an idea of that religion which was confirmed, with gracious condescension, by the interposition of divine power; but we scarcely imagine the Church Journal critic will consider us obnoxious to censure for this. We have, indeed, a reverence for religion, which it would be vain for us to attempt to demonstrate by the use of any such language as we can control. Our spirit sinks prostrate in utter humiliation at the idea of its sublimity. Earth, with its vain show, passes away, and we stand front to front, as it were, with all the eternal grandeur of heaven. God is present to us in all his mighty attributes of Omnipotence, Omniscience, and Immortality. The stupendous scheme of christian revelation passes with its mighty shadow. The universal guilt which preceded it—the gloom of impending punishment—the incarnation of divinity—descent upon earth—persecution, insult—and the last act of the great tragedy, with all the dread paraphernalia of Jews, gibbets, and malefactors. These are the thoughts which sweep through our mind, filling it with

feelings of unutterable solemnity, whenever the subject of religion is mentioned in our presence. Its consolations are necessary to us all, at some period of our lives. Whether in the palace, or in the cottage; whether born to the humblest lot, or destined to the proudest career; whether happy, or taught the uses of sorrow. It fills us with benevolence—teaches us to regard the frailties of our fellow men with charity, calms our passions, and robs us of our prejudices and animosities. Such is religion, and such are its beautiful uses; but how badly illustrated by the reverend gentleman who has furnished the world with the critical article in the *Quarterly Church Journal*! “He has brought with him to politics nothing but its passions.” Nothing of the spirit of religion, save that which has so often lighted up the fires of persecution. Under the surplice of the priest, there seems to have raged as angry passions as ever boiled beneath the mantilla of the Spanish bravo. Charity, though so fervently inculcated by our Saviour and St. Paul,* has shed none of its softening influence over his nature. Justice has appealed in vain to his heart, though upon earth, to preach up justice among men. The feelings of the living constitute no claim upon his consideration. The pride of a nation is crushed, and trampled upon with insulting mockery. The gratitude of human bosoms for illustrious services is laughed to scorn. The grave, whose sanctity is respected by the Pagan barbarian, is violated by this apostolic missionary of the faith of civilized Christendom. With the sacred war-cry of God and the Church on his lips, he has pursued his illustrious victim through life with savage hostility. Breathing naught but the holiest fervor of religion, he has performed feats which would not have disgraced the

* The greater part of the sermon on the mount is taken up in teaching the importance of charity.—*vide* 18th chap. 1st Epis. to Corinthians—5th and 6th chap. Matthew.

disciple of Odin, or Manitou. Fighting under the cross of our Saviour, he has manifested a spirit better becoming the crescent of the Mussulman. Cold-blooded irony, and cutting taunt, not unworthy of Goethe's Mephistophiles in his most mocking humor, stir up the blood of the reader in this critical chef-d'œuvre of the pastor. Sentiments are scattered here and there, which savor more of *Paradise lost*, than of *Paradise to be regained*.

"Study of revenge, immortal hate."*

Rendered delirious by a holy horror of *deistical* opinions, he has furnished a striking illustration of the principles of the *atheist*. With an anxious zeal for the religious feelings of the rising generation, he has committed a most flagrant outrage upon those of the generation with which he is contemporary. For the wand of Peace, he has substituted "the two-edged sword" of the Psalmist, and wields it he does with a vigor that would not have been unbecoming in the battle-axe of the Lion-Hearted, in his conflict with the Saracen. War to the knife, appears to have been the fell determination of this pious militant. Where we expected the smile of compassion, our blood is chilled by the sneer of revenge. Where the suggestion of kind humanity, there the speculation of cold-blooded, unsympathizing hate. Where the glow of patriotism, intensified by christian feeling, there the mockery of the soulless sceptic, and the insensible ingrate. The genius of Calvin and Cranmer,† if it had not quailed in the presence of our religious warrior, would have bowed in undissembled homage to his uncompromising spirit of hostility. Mary of England would have delighted to have honored him with a seat

*Milton. Speech of Satan.

† "Calvin burnt Servetus at Geneva—Cranmer brought Arians and Anabaptists to the stake."—Hume's *His. of Eng.* vol. iii. p. 538.

side by side with Lord North,* around the funeral pyre of Ridley, Latimer, and Hawkes.† He would have applied the torch with an iron pulse, and composed an admirable hymn in praise of the justice of her Catholic Majesty, to be chaunted while the work was going on.

But, to be serious : what a piteous and melancholy spectacle has he furnished, of the worst passions of the bigot ! What a sad exhibition of the weakness of all human and heavenly restraints, when opposed to some of the evil propensities of our nature ! What a pregnant and portentous commentary upon the spirit of christianity ! All this we say in a spirit of unaffected and untriumphing sorrow.

“ It was the fate of Thomas Jefferson to be at once more loved and praised by his friends, and hated and reviled by his enemies, than any of his compatriots.” Such is the sentence we find in the Preface of the biographer of Mr. Jefferson, made in a spirit of historic truth, and philosophical remark. It is an observation which would force itself upon every one who should come to know the manner in which Mr. Jefferson was regarded by his friends and foes, and yet our political divine is very far from admitting the equivocal compliment which it conveys. It is an observation, which every philosophical writer, investigating the state of feeling among the contemporaries of a great man, would make, as presenting a curious moral phenomenon, not in *itself* a subject of honor, or infamy. It is a remark which history has recorded of many distinguished personages, from Socrates and Aristides down to William Pitt and Napoleon. Scarce any great man, whose appearance and writings have formed an epoch in the history of the human mind, from Aristotle down to Luther and Galileo, but has enjoyed the most ardent

* Queen Mary's chief agent in the persecution of the reformers. — Hume's *His. of Eng.*

† Protestants burnt at the stake.

attachment of his friends, and the bitterest hostility of his enemies. George Washington himself, we beg leave, in opposition to our political divine, to say, constituted no exception to this fate of the præeminently great. There was a party in the United States, albeit unknown to him, that hated Washington with as cordial a hate as ever animated the bosom of a High Churchman, against a dissenting heretic. All this is true; but who ever, in noticing the lives of these distinguished men, took advantage of the fact, to draw conclusions injurious to their fame?—to indulge in speculations as to the cause, as though *when* found, it must necessarily be *fatal* to their characters?

The peculiarity in the fate of Mr. Jefferson, it will be recollected, consists in having been, at the same time, *more loved* and *more hated* than any one of his compatriots; and the holy critic sets out to investigate the cause of this singular cœexistence of opposite and extreme feelings. Now, it would strike any man of common sense, that in prosecuting this inquiry, both feelings were equally important—the extreme love, as well as the extreme hate. The circumstance of a man enjoying the devoted affection of his friends, is not an unusual one in the lives of good men; and the privilege of enjoying the special detestation of our enemies, is not so uncommon a one that our reverend Reviewer will not admit it, we think, to be illustrated by his own feelings toward Mr. Jefferson. It is the contemporaneous existence of the two feelings that constitute the phenomenon, and an inquiry into it as such, one would certainly deem it as important for the purpose, to discover the source of the love, as the hate. And yet our pious philosopher, after stating the fact in the endless variety of forms, half insinuating, and half conjectural, so well known to the practised advocate, (and which might almost induce one to believe that he himself had been brought up to the bar, and only now, like old Priam, when preparing for combat, put on

*unaccustomed armor—arma diu desueta humeris**)—after having enlarged and dwelt upon the question until it assumes a portentous importance in the eyes of the reader—after comparing the fate of Mr. Jefferson in this particular, with one,† the blameless purity of whose nature was never suspected by friend or foe, and with another,‡ whose image is *now* held in sainted reverence by all his countrymen, concludes his observations without a *single word as to the cause* of the peculiar *affection* which he enjoyed from his friends; and for the reason of the peculiar hatred, *assumes* that in progress of time, as his character became better known, “less was discovered worthy of admiration”! What justification the reverend gentleman can furnish for treating the subject in this disingenuous manner, we know not, unless it may be that in his extreme anxiety for the formation of his sentences, he loses sight of his sentiments, and in the gratification of his passions, he forgets his philosophy.

The next portion of the biography which claims the worthy pastor’s consideration, is that in which allusion is made to Mr. Jefferson’s religious opinions. We are no advocates, God knows, of the peculiar doctrines entertained by this illustrious man upon the subject of christianity, nor are we the indiscriminate apologists of his character; but we see no reason why his memory should be hunted down with unremitting rancor, because, in the solitude of his closet, his mind came to certain conclusions about it; and, in the confidence of epistolary intercourse, he communicated them to an early and long-tried friend. Still less do we see any reason why a pious man should embrace the occasion afforded by such private expressions of opinion, to charge another with “*low trickery, deliberate falsehood, and a demoniacal spirit of proselytism!*” Such is the eagerness of the critic to charge Mr.

* Virgil.

† Madison.

‡ Washington.

Jefferson with the latter crime, that he deems of no moment his biographer's assertion, that his letters upon this subject were published *contrary* to his wishes. Now, we are so simple minded as to imagine that this is the very "*jugulum causæ*," to use the pious gentleman's own elegant Latinity. Upon the truth or the falsity of this assertion, depends the criminality, or the innocence of "the third President of the United States." We are at this day, too far advanced in the science of mental philosophy to hold a man criminal for the involuntary opinions of his mind.* It is only when he publishes these opinions to the world, and endeavors to disseminate them, that he renders himself, if at all, obnoxious to censure. If Mr. Jefferson *then*, confined his views of christianity to his own bosom, or communicated them in a half doubting, philosophical spirit, to the sacred confidence of a friend, he is clearly not liable to the rebuke of moral men, or the anathemas of the christian clergy.

Perhaps the critic may deem equally unimportant the truth of his assertion with regard to the nature of Mr. Jefferson's conversations upon the subject of religion. We shall not imitate his courtesy of language, and charge him with intentional misrepresentation; but we have spent many years of our life in the immediate neighborhood of Mr. Jefferson—have dined at his table—listened to his conversation—and we religiously declare that we never heard from his lips any opinion upon religion, nor did we ever hear that he was in the habit of expressing any to others. We know that up to the day of his death, his views upon this great topic were the source of mysterious conjecture among his neighbors. Doubts were entertained, from what cause we know not, just as they have been about Dr. Franklin and General Washing-

* Jesus Christ never condemned, censured, nor judged any man for his errors of opinion.

ton and others ; but his outward observance of the Sabbath, and his occasional appearance at the church of Mr. Hatch, in the adjoining village of Charlottesville, were very far from strengthening the opinions of those who were disposed to attribute *deistical* principles to him.

The reverend gentleman's blood is now up, and he strikes about him with reckless fury, which, like the scorpion's, when begirt by fire, promises more injury to himself, than to any body else. He next makes a charge, which, in candor, I am forced to admit, he must have perceived to be utterly destructive of the one respecting the *zeal for proselytism*, if his faculties had been in their accustomed state of acuteness. "In the last years of his life, when questioned by any of his friends, he (Mr. J.) used to say he was a Unitarian." Such is the assertion of the biographer, which the critic receives with the greatest thoughtlessness and inconsistency, and immediately lays down, as a basis upon which to pile another pyramid of calumny. Just urging home upon the ex-president the fiend-like crime of innoculating others with his own blighting infidelity, he now, forsooth, charges him with the opposite and inconsistent baseness of passing himself off for a member of one of the christian denominations. One moment a Mephistophiles, coolly shutting out heaven from the view of the unfortunate, and alluring him on to a fatal compact with the Prince of Darkness, the next a worldly hypocrite, claiming for himself the protecting mantle of a christian sect ! Now, with Satan's banner unfurled over his head, beating up recruits to the impious standard, now a hoary dissembler, who, for temporal purposes, unrolls the *fleur de lis* of the christian Unitarian.

Singular obliviousness and richness of imagination ! It matters not that the representation in one form is inconsistent with his appearance in the other. They equally in their turn answer the cherished purpose of defamation. The qualities may not harmonize—the

parts may not correspond. But it is of little moment to the holy writer, who, only recollecting the license accorded the poet and the painter, quite forgets the limit which the king of Parnassus has assigned to such spirit of adventurous genius.

"Non ut
Serpentes avibus geminenter, tigribus agni."—*Horace*.

But why does he pronounce, with such triumphant boldness, that Mr. Jefferson was not a Unitarian, and that he uttered a falsehood when he said he was? Does he really believe it, and does he really think that he has demonstrated it conclusively? To admit the truth of the latter part of the inquiry, would be paying a compliment to his heart at the expense of his head, which, we take it, would be a species which would not prove very acceptable to his peculiar notions. When he affirms that materialism was a received doctrine of Mr. Jefferson, and that therefore he could not have been a Unitarian, what does he mean? Can he be bold enough, in spite of all that this great man has written, to step forth before the world, and proclaim him an apostle of the brutalizing materialism of Bolingbroke, Voltaire, Holbach, and Diderot?—a denier of the immortality of the soul, who levels his species to the same point in animal creation with the beasts of the field—the destroyer of heaven, who, at the same time disenchanting this world—the fiend, who annihilates the hope of happiness *hereafter*, and thus makes misfortune insupportable in *this life*! Surely the pious writer could not have believed this of Mr. Jefferson, and we should be sorry, for the sake of human nature, to think that he designed it to be believed by others—and yet he says that materialism "was a received doctrine of Mr. Jefferson." There is one explanation which may exonerate him from the guilt of the intention, but he cannot be admitted to the benefit of it, unless he will acknowledge that he is *ignorant* of that about which he has written, viz :

the Unitarian's creed, or that knowing it, he has wilfully *misrepresented* it. The materialism which Mr. Jefferson professed, it is not difficult to get at. It is the materialism of which he speaks in his letter to William Short, found in page 13th of the Review, and in the fourth volume of his correspondence. "The materialism of good works in contradistinction to the spiritualism of faith." Such is the dread materialism of the ex-president, and did not our theological critic know that the Unitarian preached the same doctrine? If he *did not*, then has he "proved that he was grossly ignorant of his tenets."* If he *did*, then we must say, that to our minds there is something exceedingly "disingenuous"—something "savoring" of the littleness "of trick"—something which goes beyond the littleness of trick, and swells into the magnitude of a worse crime—in thus resisting Mr. Jefferson's claim to be considered a Unitarian, upon the ground of his entertaining this doctrine. Thus inducing those who know nothing of the peculiar principles of the Unitarian Church, to believe that he was the propagator of the most demoralizing and degrading system that ever disgraced human lips, or was engendered in the madness of a demoniacal philosophy. Again, surely the reverend gentleman cannot be serious in his effort to exclude Mr. Jefferson from the church of the Unitarian, because, in his various musings upon man's moral nature, he questioned the wisdom of grief in the moral economy, and, in the unrestrained freedom of philosophical correspondence, communicated his doubts to a friend.—(page 12.)

But admitting that Mr. Jefferson may, at one time of his life, have differed with the Unitarians about the exact character of Christ, whether an inspired prophet or not—ignorant as we are now bound in charity to believe the

* Sparks' Inquiry into the Moral Tendency of Trinitarian and Unitarian Doctrines—pp. 309, 10, and 11.

reverend gentleman is, of their precise doctrines, would it not have been more charitable, and equally reasonable, to suppose, that in the solitude of old age, he had changed his opinions, and had dragged himself within a christian temple, to die, than that in the last days of his life, he should have repeatedly uttered a deliberate falsehood from the most dastardly motives? How much more natural, a conclusion this to predicate of the deserted statesman, and the abandoned idol, (vide Reviewer's remarks, p. 7,) in the cheerlessness of his last evenings. But, alas! charity is a stranger to the bosom of our pious critic, and probabilities based upon moral physiology are not dreamt of in his science!

But *admitting* that Mr. Jefferson never was during his life, nor at the time of his death, an Unitarian, why this furious zeal and ungracious eagerness to snatch from his family the consolation which the belief affords? Why, when he tells them before his death that he had prayed in a christian church, and hoped for a christian's forgiveness, does the pious writer charge him with uttering a falsehood, and thus cruelly lacerate their sensibilities?

But he stops not here, nor with this. In the following page, speaking of a memorandum in Mr. Jefferson's *Ana* respecting some conversations which he had with Clarke and Rush, upon the subject of General Washington's religious opinions, he makes these observations:

"Nor does such a man endeavor to give currency to his opinions by seeking to array in their support the influence of high and honored names. And finally, if he be really *honest* in his *doubts*, if the *hatred of a bad heart* be not mistaken for the perplexities of an embarrassed head, he will scorn the baseness of leaving behind him a written record, implicating the departed, and not to be used until after his own death; so that when produced, the calumniated will be past the power of denial, and the calum-

niator safe from the world's indignant expression of reprobation!!"—p. 15.

What a complication of atrocities is here attributed in a single paragraph, to a public benefactor, now in his grave, by a minister of a religious sect! What a frightful cluster of crimes, black as night, has the hand of a clergyman here furnished, to adorn the memory of an illustrious patriot!!

In the first sentence Mr. Jefferson is charged, in the eagerness of proselytism, of arraying the "influence of high and honored names" in support of his infidel doctrines. In the second, if any thing is intelligible save the ambition of *fine writing*, his sincerity in these very abominable doctrines is *itself* questioned—and he is accused of attributing them to distinguished cotemporaries, not for the purpose, but the instant before affirmed, of securing their reception among men—but with the view of blasting their fame in after ages, and thus gratifying "the hatred of a bad heart"!! One moment, he paints him a furious infidel, with hot and unholy enthusiasm, advancing his fatal principles under the *ægis* of great men's names—the next, an unbeliever in his own damnable infidelity, ("not honest in his doubts,") and attributing it to Washington and others to satisfy the monstrous and immeasurable hate of his diabolical bosom. And this attribution, too, not during their mutual lives, when the effect of such calumny might have been grateful, if ever, to a spirit soured, as he says, by personal jealousy, but reserved with cold-blooded vindictiveness through many years, to be made known when they were both in their graves—the libeller and the libelled—and their souls perhaps before the judgment seat of their God!! All that private memoirs, or the annals of history, or our own experience tell us of revenge, fade into utter insignificance by contrast with this act of the third President of the United States! The genius of the poet, occupied with the passion, never conceived any thing more

atrocious! The world has ever admired the Iago of Shakspeare, and thought nature could no farther go; but the revenge of the Lieutenant is tame when compared with this of the author of the Declaration of Independence, looking, as it does, beyond the grave for gratification, and providing, with epicurean forecaste, for the pleasures of another world! How hot must be the pious critic's own passions, to have induced him to attribute such to others! How any being, with the humanity of our nature about him, can deliberately charge another with such an intention, without evidence which no mind can resist, is inconceivable to us, except upon the supposition of a hatred as intense as that which he supposes to have prompted the intention itself. But how a christian, and a christian minister, can essay to affix such an atrocity to the memory of a man who devoted his whole life to his country, is, we confess, scarcely comprehensible to us upon any supposition; or if upon any, upon such a one as respect to his profession and ourselves prevents us from alluding to. Were not the different charges utterly contradictory of each other, we should perhaps think it worth while to stop for a moment to expose the absurdity and utter groundlessness of this among others. Fortunately for Mr. Jefferson's memory, they will but serve to furnish another illustration of the intensity of the *odium theologicum*, or of the strange blunders into which a man of sense is sometimes led by the influence of his passions.

A few sentences after the Reviewer has made this accusation against Mr. Jefferson, he goes on to make some observations as to the manner in which the calumny has been given to the world. "Willing to insinuate," he says, "that he, (General Washington,) was like minded with himself, (Jefferson,) he yet shrinks from the responsibility of an explicit declaration, and screens himself under the convenient cover of "Dr. Rush tells me," &c. Now, there are no remarks made any where by the reverend

gentleman which more clearly show the spirit with which he was actuated toward the memory of Mr. Jefferson, and with which he sat down to write the article upon his life. He seems utterly to forget the most material facts, and goes on to draw his conclusions, and hurl his denunciations without the slightest regard to them. What has Mr. Jefferson done, and what is the crime imputed to him? While Secretary of State, and President of the United States, he was in the habit, it seems, of recording his daily conversations with the most distinguished men, for purposes, it must be presumed, of future history, or private memoir. The journal in which he kept these conversations, he termed his *Ana*. He made no use of it during his life, and since his death it has been published by his executor, whether with, or against his wishes, no human being can pretend to say. In this journal are found some observations which were made to him by Asa Clarke, and Gouverneur Morris, upon the subject of General Washington's religious opinions. These are the facts. From the saloon, then, it appears, he retires to his closet; and there, as a historian, or curious observer of the characters of men, he records a fact which he had just received upon the credit of a distinguished gentleman respecting the sentiments of another, still more distinguished, and while writing down the conversation, goes on as it were, thinking aloud to himself, and states what he had heard from another individual upon the same subject. Here is the whole head and front of his offending—it hath this extent—no more. Upon these facts as a basis the charitable critic of the Church Journal proceeds to found two distinct accusations: that of cowardice, and falsehood in two ways—suppression of the truth, as well as suggestion of that which is false. “Mr. Jefferson was willing to accuse General Washington of being an infidel,” he says, “but shrank from the responsibility of an explicit declaration of the fact, and screened himself under the convenient cover

of Dr. Rush, and others." How absurd is all this ! What responsibility is there in making an "explicit declaration" which is only to see the light when the author of it is dead, as well perhaps as the person against whom it is made ? The writer seems utterly to forget that this record concerning General Washington was made in an *Ana* reserved, if for publication at all, for *posthumous* publication, and that if Mr. Jefferson had been actuated by the fell hate and desire of injury attributed to him—utterly regardless of truth as he says he was—he would have stepped forth from behind the screen of other men's names, and boldly avowed the truth as of his own knowledge. He may be disposed to get out of the difficulty by saying that he alludes to a different species of responsibility, viz : moral responsibility. But surely our pious pastor is not so ignorant of the science of ethics as not to know that there is as much moral turpitude in the suppression of the truth, as there is in the declaration of the false ; and that there consequently could have been no greater moral responsibility in an explicit declaration of the fact of Washington's infidelity, than in adopting the hearsay evidence of others about it, when, conscious as the critic says Mr. Jefferson was, at the time, that it was utterly false ! Again, says the Reviewer, "he had it in his power to speak, of his own knowledge—why cite Mr. Morris ?" Incomprehensible forgetfulness a second time ! Can he not keep the fact in his mind that the paper from which he extracts is a *contemporaneous* record of the conversations of the day, and not a *biographical article* of General Washington, professing among other things, to explain the nature of his religious sentiments. A *mere memorandum* made from time to time, of what he heard, and not *speculations after death* as to the character of his views respecting christianity. Had it been of the latter nature, it would have been proper for him to have stated the results of his own observations, if *indeed* they would have *contradicted* the

testimony of Asa Clarke and Gouverneur Morris. Had they, on the other hand, been such as would have confirmed it—notwithstanding the pious gentleman thinks “a noble frankness should have prompted him to state the fact”—yet as we think “there is no philanthropy in depriving a fellow creature of something, which, however doubtful, yet imparts comfort to him who believes it,” (page 15)—and surely the name of Washington as an infidel would have had this tendency; it would have been better, it appears to us, to have withheld such confirmation.

Again, the captious critic finds fault with Mr. Jefferson for recording the conversations *at all*, which he had with Mr. Morris; and, forsooth, because it appears from the language in which he alludes to Mr. Morris’s declaration upon this occasion, as well as from another part of his *Ana*, that he did not give full credit to the intimacy which he, (Mr. M.) claimed with General Washington, and that he thought him a sanguine man, apt to believe every thing true that he desired to be so. Now, all this proceeds from the ever continuing forgetfulness of the character of the *Ana*, and the invincible determination on the part of the critic, to represent Mr. Jefferson as the public prosecutor against General Washington’s fame. Mr. Jefferson was not making out a case against Washington, to use language which may be more familiar to the pious gentleman’s ears. If he had, he probably would have reported the testimony of Mr. Morris, without the language which seems to diminish its claims to credibility. He would have carefully abstained from any observation calculated to impair his right to public confidence, and thus perhaps have conclusively established the guilt of the first President upon unexceptionable testimony. But this was not his object. He did not desire to make the world believe that Washington was an infidel. He wished to record facts, such as they were communicated to him. He gave the evidence upon which they rested, for better or for worse,

and indifferent as a faithful chronicler whether it was received or not, he did not hesitate to express his opinion of the character of the witnesses by which it was furnished. This is the simple solution of a matter which has afforded the malice of our Reviewer the richest materials of defamation. With his imagination disordered by the fumes of a theological hate, he can see nothing in every object but horns and a cloven foot. He cannot conceive the possibility of a man sitting down to record facts in a philosophical spirit of observation. Drawing his reasons from his own nature, he deems such occupation insipid to a man of spirit and sense, and at once proceeds to animate him with rancorous hatred, and to present him to the reader in all the appalling features of a deliberate slanderer.

The next subject in the biography which furnishes field for the display of the critic's invective, is Mr. Jefferson's views respecting the University of Virginia. He denounces him for "having designed to make this institution a place "where the minds of young and unsuspecting youth were "to be poisoned with the venom of atheism—where they "were to be taught that the Sabbath was to be abolished—"that God Almighty was not the Lord of the universe—"and where a deliberate attempt was to be made to overthrow the whole fabric of the christian religion," etc.—(pp. 18, 19.) Now, can it be believed possible, that there is not the slightest foundation for all this overwhelming mass of accusation—this charge of conspiracy so gigantic against the religion of half the world—this purpose so Satanic in its conception and means of execution? Never did one word, that we have ever heard, reach the ears of the public, respecting the religious opinions which were to be taught at the University! Mr. Jefferson never contemplated the establishment of a professorship in any way connected with the subject of christianity; and in the original plan embracing the different departments of the college, not

one syllable is to be found upon the matter. Never in the appointment of professors, was any inquiry made, that we have known, in allusion to their peculiar principles of religion. Never in any of his various official and private conversations with them, from the origin of the institution up to the day of his death, did we ever hear, (and we were ourselves a student there for many years,) that he had expressed any wish or desire, in any way connected with his peculiar views upon the subject. So utterly and entirely destitute of foundation is this whole fabric of the pious writer's imagination, that even Mr. Jefferson's ideas of christianity were ever a matter of doubt among the young men of the University !

The reader will be astonished to learn that the sole justification for all that the critic has said upon this subject, is to be found in a private *confidential* letter to Mr. Short,* in which Mr. Jefferson takes occasion to animadvert with some bitterness upon what he supposes to be the characteristic spirit and practice of the different religious denominations, as displayed in their controversies with each other, and in their denunciations of the appointment of Dr. Cooper, to a professorship in a literary institution. A simple figure of speech, *perhaps not in the best taste*, by which to illustrate the power of public opinion, he denominates it "the Lord of the universe," is, what seems to his alarmed and Quixotic fancy, incontrovertible evidence of a design to dethrone the God of the universe!† The

* Jefferson's Correspondence, vol. iv. p. 320.

† The probability of Mr. Jefferson's having designed to have such doctrines taught at the University of Virginia, as well as the character of his conversations upon the subject of religion, and his imputed proselyting spirit generally, may be judged of correctly by reference to the following expressions, in a letter of his to Mr. Adams, dated August 22d, 1813 :

"Very soon after my letter to Dr. Priestley, the subject being still in my mind, I had leisure during an abstraction from business, for a day or two, while on the road, to think a little more on it, and to sketch more fully than I had done then, a syllabus of the matter which I thought should enter into the

solution of the whole matter, and at the same time the extent of Mr. Jefferson's criminality upon this subject, will be found in the simple fact, that, from an unwillingness to favor one sect more than another, religion was not incorporated in the original plan of the University. It is this *atrocious impartiality*, which has kindled the towering indignation of our pious warrior, and called down his anathemas upon the memory of the unfortunate ex-president of the United States. Religion was not excluded—nor was it included in the University. All the different denominations were invited to preach, but none were invested with the exclusive privileges of inculcating their peculiar doctrines from the lecture rooms of the college. It was not intended to be an arena for the display of gladiatorial theology—with how much propriety, we willingly leave it to the public to determine. What he means by “the experiment failing,” we confess we do not understand, for religion has no farther connection with the University at this moment, than it had upon the day when its halls were first thrown open.*

We shall pass over with but one single remark the pious critic's observations upon what he is pleased to term Mr. Jefferson's standard of moral propriety. And it is this, that we are astonished that any just man should be disengenuous enough to take advantage of an accidental expression, thrown out for the purpose of showing that no

work. I wrote to Dr. Rush, and there ended all my labor on the subject. Himself and Dr. P. being the only depositories of my secret. The fate of my letter to Dr. P., after his death, was a warning to me on that of Dr. Rush; and at my request, his family were so kind as to quiet me by returning my original letter and syllabus. By this you will be sensible how much interest I take in keeping myself clear of religious disputes before the public. Yet I enclose it to you with entire confidence, free to be perused by yourself and Mrs. A., but by no one else, and to be returned to me.”

* Messrs. Madison, Monroe, Chapman Johnson, and other religious gentlemen, were Trustees of the University with Mr. Jefferson.

argument can be drawn against the existence of a moral sense from the different estimation of the same act in different societies, and represent it as containing a full exposition of views respecting the criterion of moral propriety.* The reverend critic, finding the errors of the ex-president upon metaphysics, however, a little less easy of demonstration than those in religion, now bounds off, and goes slashing and cutting away at his character in a general manner. He finds him guilty of the *horrible crime* of sensitiveness to public opinion, and to this *unpardonable weakness* attributes the composition of the journal so often before alluded to—the *Ana*! Charges him, *en passant*, with the little peccadillo of calling God solemnly in attestation to conscious lies, and ends by representing him in the humiliating character of a second Nestor or Cicero, recounting to his listening countrymen the tale of his exploits. As an American citizen, proud of Mr. Jefferson's fame, the feeling pastor sheds tears of mortification and regret at this voluntary self abasement!—(pp. 22, 23.)

Having but a few pages back denounced the ex-president, the reader will recollect, for foully slandering General Washington, to gratify his malignant hatred, he *now* says, alluding to the memoranda in his *Ana*, that as “no rivalry was to be apprehended” between them, he could *sometimes* speak of him favorably—while he goes on to remark, one fourth of all his malicious *on dits* are levelled against him whom he supposed to be his most dangerous competitor for the highest honors of his country! Hamilton—Jefferson's most dangerous competitor for the Presidency of the United States! How well has our political divine read the political annals of his country, and how profound are his observations upon them! But we forget. This is the exact point in the Review at which the holy gentleman

* Vide page 20 of the Review.

doffs his surplice, and puts on the civil dress of the politician. Here we greet him in a new character, and see his genius under a different phasis. Here we find that the natural strength of his abilities is only surpassed by their versatility, and that his excellence in one role, is only paralleled by the Protean facility with which he assumes other characters, and ranges at will through the various departments of the critical drama.

We will not occupy any space with observations upon the subject of the critic's allusion to the Mazzei letter, satisfied that Mr. Jefferson's correspondence with Mr. Van Buren, and the explanation of his biographer, furnish a satisfactory defence from every charge, except that of a too vague phraseology, and an exaggerated style, in which his morbid fears of Federalists—like those of Mr. Burke upon the subject of the French revolution—had led him to indulge. As for the letter to Colonel Burr, an undue importance has been given to it, we think, as well by the *peculiar* attempt on the part of the biographer to explain it,* as by the remarks of the Reviewer in condemnation. To admit that it is not characterized by the candor which marks the confessions of the Catholic to his priest, or the young maiden to her lover, is what we readily do; but who ever looked for, or what is more to the purpose, who ever found such, in the communications of politicians or statesmen? *Volto sciolto, pensieri stretti*, is a maxim which having long regulated the conduct of ministerial and diplomatic men in Europe, was not, we beg leave to inform our critical censor, *first* introduced into this country by Mr. Jefferson, nor has it been repudiated since his death. However much we may regret it, we cannot make it otherwise, and he who looks for the same frankness between politicians and public men, that ought to characterize the intercourse of private gentle-

* Vide Tucker's Life of Jefferson, vol. ii. p. 76.

men, will only expose his own simplicity. "I had endeavored," says Mr. Jefferson, "to compose an administration whose talent, integrity, names, and dispositions, should at once inspire unbounded confidence in the public mind. I lose you from the list."* Now that Colonel Burr at the time this letter was written was considered by a large majority of the people of the United States, a man of talents and integrity, there is conclusive evidence in the result just then made known of the election for President and Vice-President. He had received an *equal* number of electoral votes with Mr. Jefferson himself! Whatever then might have been Mr. Jefferson's private feelings toward Colonel Burr, there was certainly no duplicity in designating him as one whose talents and integrity would "inspire unbounded confidence in the public mind." He does not allude, nor is there, singular enough to say, one *single word* in the whole letter respecting his personal impressions, or individual sentiments toward Colonel Burr. He is spoken of solely as one of those "gentlemen who possessed the public confidence." As to his talents, Mr. Jefferson admits, and it would have been folly in any one to have denied that Colonel Burr possessed talents of a very superior order, that might have made him eminently useful in the service of his country. Hence the expression of his opinion as to his capacity "for rendering substantial service to the public." As to his confidence in Colonel Burr's patriotism, and disposition to devote his talents to the public good, there could have been no doubt in Mr. Jefferson's mind *even* in 1806, as we find by a conversation which he had with Colonel Burr, the particulars of which he has himself recorded, and which the Reviewer has quoted in page 13 of his article. "I observed to him," he says, "that I had a confidence if he were employed, that

* Correspondence, vol. iii. p. 444.

he would use his talents for the public good." In the *Ana*, however, we find this observation respecting Colonel Burr : "I had never seen Colonel Burr till he came as a member of the Senate. His conduct very soon inspired me with distrust. I habitually cautioned Mr. Madison against trusting him too much. I saw afterward, that under General Washington's and Mr. Adams' administration, whenever a great military or diplomatic appointment was to be made, he came post to Philadelphia, to show himself, and in fact that he was always at market, if they wanted him. He was told by Dayton, in 1800, that he might be Secretary at War ; but this bid came too late. With these impressions of Colonel Burr, there never had been an intimacy between us, and but little association. When I destined him for a high appointment, it was out of respect for the favor he had obtained with the republican party, by his extraordinary exertions and success in the New-York election in 1800."

Now, between this and the preceding letter and conversation, we confess we do not see the utter contradiction and inconsistency which seems so apparent to the critic's mind. The "distrust" here meant was evidently nothing more than *doubts* entertained respecting the strength of his attachment to the democratic party, of which he, Colonel Burr, and Mr. Madison were members, and hence the assertion which soon follows in relation to his willingness to have taken office under General Washington and Mr. Adams, and the attempt of Dayton to buy him over by the offer of the Secretaryship of War. There can be no doubt of the correctness of this interpretation, and the reverend gentleman must have known it at the time he quoted the different expressions for the purposes of abuse. Now, between a disposition to abandon one party for the sake of participating in the administration of the country through the influence of *another*, and a determination to make use of the power, when *thus* obtained, for the public good,

there is no *necessary incompatibility*. We are very far from vindicating the too common crime of desertion of party for the sake of office, but certainly the *mere fact* is not irreconcilable with the most devoted patriotism, and therefore Mr. Jefferson's distrust of Colonel Burr's fidelity to the democratic party is not necessarily inconsistent with the most decided expression of his belief, that if employed he would devote his talents to the public good. An ardent desire to be of service to your country, accompanied with a conviction that the party to which you belong will never furnish you with the means, might prompt an individual to such a step. This was the justification proffered by the celebrated Mr. Canning for his political apostacy, and it has been thought a good one. But whether it is or not, no one ever questioned his entire devotion to the interests of England, though he had purchased the control of her destinies by the voluntary abandonment of the political party to which he stood pledged from his youth. If this be correct reasoning, what becomes of the charges of duplicity, dishonesty, and systematic deception, which our pious Reviewer has poured forth, with such friendly prodigality, upon the subject of this letter of Mr. Jefferson to Colonel Burr?

The next aspect in which our clergyman presents himself to the reader, is, oh! *fons lachrymarum*, as another Captain Bobadil, commentating with choice phrase upon the celebrated custom of the "*Duello*," and expounding with rare felicity the whole "*Code of Honor*." In this most warlike guise he makes an insidious attack upon Mr. Jefferson's character as a man of courage, indulging in sneers at his conduct during the invasion of Virginia by Arnold, and hunting up old *abortive* movements of political and personal foes in the Legislature of that State, for the purpose of lending color to the insinuation. And yet, conscious that the subject is not becoming a "professor" of religion, he attempts a miserable apology by saying that he

should not have touched the question of courage at all, but for "the fact that his biographer repelled the charge of cowardice by the production of what he considered equivocal proof of firmness of nerve." Now what wretched disingenuousness is all this, and how unworthy a man of truth and piety! Why, if this had been the only reason, did he not confine himself to the question as to what testimony, the giving, or the acceptance of a challenge furnishes of bravery? Why allude in a contemptuous manner to Mr. Jefferson's conduct when governor? Why recall the recollection of the impeachment attempted to be got up against him in the Legislature of Virginia, and *omit* to say that it signally failed, and that a resolution of entire approbation of his conduct was afterwards *unanimously* passed?*

But why, above all things, did he not admit Mr. Jefferson's willingness to afford this proof of courage, as asserted by his biographer, and go on to argue its insufficiency to sustain his inference? Why say that the fact of having intended to send a cartel could come alone from him, and consequently was not entitled to credence, when he must have known, that Mr. Tucker could have derived it as well from the "second"; and most probably *did*? Why, to prove that Mr. Jefferson did not design to send the challenge at all, does he distort the biographer's language, and make him say that he abandoned the idea "because his second refused to bear his challenge," when he in reality says, that he abandoned it because his friend did not "second his purpose"? (p. 33.) A man who should apply to the reverend gentleman himself, to bear a cartel to another, and should altogether relinquish the intention of sending one, because the reverend gentleman, albeit somewhat belligerent, should decline this office

of friendship, would be perhaps a coward. But a gentleman who consults a friend in whom he has confidence, and is by that friend persuaded that the cause does not warrant an appeal to arms, or that some peculiar circumstances would render such a step highly unbecoming in him—and in consequence revokes “his determination to challenge”—may be as brave a man as ever stood in the tented field. “It becomes not a professor” of christianity “to adduce such evidence” of *cowardice* as is furnished by an unwillingness to send a challenge to a mortal combat. “Young men are ready enough to adopt the belief, that what “the world calls wounded honor can only be healed by “murder, and it is not necessary to countenance indirectly “their false notions,” (p. 33,) by laboriously attempting to despoil Mr. Jefferson of the honor of having designed to send a cartel ; and thus indisputably admitting it to be an intention, the execution of which would have conferred some renown, and afforded some proof of courage, and the omission to execute which reflects some disgrace, and exhibits some timidity. The charge of cowardice is a very grave one, and calculated seriously to diminish our respect for any man, however great his mental or moral qualities. The one against Mr. Jefferson rests entirely, it appears, upon the fact of his retreat from Monticello at the approach of the British, under Tarleton, during the war of the revolution. Now, surely the pious gentleman could not have expected him to have remained, and opposed, single handed, whole troops of cavalry, flushed, too, with victory, and led on by the Murat of the American war. It is of no avail to think of those precedents which his classical learning suggests to his recollection. The cases, if he will examine them closely, he will find to vary materially in their circumstances. The valiant Roman* that he has read of in his

* Horatius Cocles—Livy, lib. 2.

not likely will be much impaired by the criticisms of the Church Journal clergyman. We shall, for the same reason, pass over the remarks upon many of Mr. Jefferson's notions upon government, the institutions of our country, the currency, etc., and shall come directly to the last serious attack upon his veracity as a man, and his reputation as the writer of the Declaration of Independence; and we must premise that we see no good reason why this controversy should have ever originated. Mr. Jefferson, it appears, is alleged by our critic to have been aware of the existence of "the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence" at the time he wrote the one of '76, and to have borrowed from it four expressions; and he is indirectly charged with falsehood in the letter which he wrote to Mr. Adams in 1819, doubting its authenticity, and denying that he had ever seen it.*—(p. 55.) Now, even did we think Mr. Jefferson a much worse man than our pious critic thinks him, we cannot for a moment suppose that he would have deemed it necessary, as the author of the Declaration of Independence, to have denied that he had seen the Mecklenburg draft, and had taken from it the alleged expressions, unless indeed—what we believe to be the fact—he was compelled to do so by truth. Can any one imagine that he could have seriously apprehended that the immortal honor of having composed the *greatest state paper* in the world, could be impaired by an acknowledgment of having incorporated into it, from the Mecklenburg Declaration, *all* that its most enthusiastic admirer could suppose worthy of being stolen? Again, who for a moment, that knows any thing of human nature, can think that the man who had been President of this great republic, and had won for himself imperishable glory by a whole life of devoted patriotism, would run the risk, in the even-

* Jefferson's Correspondence, vol. ii. pp. 413-14.

ing of his days, of being publicly branded as a liar, rather than admit a plagiarism of four ordinary phrases in one of his political productions? The first of the expressions which he is affirmed to have taken, viz:—"dissolve the political bands which have connected"—so far from having the merit of beauty, has not even that of correctness. We cannot dissolve a band—we can only cut it, or break it. "Dissolving the political connection"—"absolving from all allegiance"—"are and of right ought to be," three other phrases in the two instruments which are quoted as identical, the reader will be amazed to learn, constitute almost *the entire body of the celebrated original resolution of Independence, moved in the Convention at Philadelphia*, by Richard Henry Lee, of Virginia. "Resolved, "that these United Colonies *are and of right ought to be* free and independent States; that they are *absolved from all allegiance* to the British crown; and that all *political connexion* between them and the state of Great Britain is and ought to be totally dissolved," etc. etc.*

Now which, we ask our pious critic, is most probable, that Mr. Jefferson borrowed these phrases from *this resolution* which called the Committee for draughting a Declaration of Independence into existence, and was before him when he commenced preparing the one which he afterward submitted, or that he took them from the celebrated Mecklenburg original, which we shall presently show, it is fair to presume, never went beyond the borders of North Carolina? Mr. Lee, however, it is to be presumed, by a parity of reason, will be said also to have borrowed from the Mecklenburg decree. This must be proved for the sake of consistency, and we hope our Reviewer and the North Carolinians will look to it in their next article upon the subject.

*Vide Journals of Congress.

“We pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor,” is the last of the celebrated duplicate sentences. It is well enough, but is it not such an expression as might occur to many an eloquent man, when wishing to dictate the most solemn oath, by which men in an hour of intense interest and deep danger, could consecrate themselves to a sublime purpose? In such a moment we should naturally pledge every thing we consider most sacred. First, our lives, as being a matter of the least moment to a brave man. Secondly, our fortunes—and lastly, our sacred honor as dearer than every thing else. Could not two persons then have fallen upon this peculiar collocation of words without previous consultation? Is there any thing really so unique in the idea, or so striking in the language, as to render it impossible, and when found in the writings of two individuals, to force the conclusion that one must have taken it from the other? We confess we think not. The merit of the idea of *a* declaration of Independence, the reader will recollect is not claimed by Mr. Jefferson. He only desires the surpassing credit of having composed the one which was actually adopted. We repeat then, does any one suppose that this proud distinction could be affected by an admitted plagiarism of the one wretched inaccuracy, and the three common places from the meagre draft of the Mecklenburg committee? Or that Mr. Jefferson could have entertained such an apprehension at the time he wrote the unfortunate letter to Mr. Adams? If he did not, then what earthly motive, save the truth, could have prompted him to the utterance of a denial so susceptible, by its very nature, if false, of being demonstrated to be so to his endless shame and infamy? Imagination could not conceive worse folly than this, and yet our charitable critic attributes it to Thomas Jefferson, “whom his worst enemy never charged with stupidity,” (p. 31,) and availing himself of the perhaps indiscreet admission of his biographer, that one paper must have been copied from the other, convicts him, as he supposes,

with the most triumphant satisfaction of having knowingly uttered an infamous falsehood. This view of the subject is conclusive to us, and renders it unnecessary to examine the evidence upon the subject of the *original* number of the Mecklenburg resolutions. We will only remark, before quitting this point of the controversy, that it is very strange when the subject of Independence was one of such profound interest to all America—when Patrick Henry had just electrified the people of Virginia by the first public allusion to its necessity*—when men's minds were agitated with it from Maine to Georgia—when the national convention was convulsed with it for weeks—when a committee of five of the most distinguished men of the colonies, from Connecticut to Virginia, were appointed to draft a declaration upon it—when the members *themselves* from North Carolina were ignorant of this celebrated Mecklenburg Declaration,† is it not strange, we add, that Mr. Jefferson should have been the only man who had seen, or had a copy of it? If any one else had enjoyed this distinguished satisfaction, the irresistible presumption is, as Mr. Adams says,‡ that it would have rung from one end of the Union to the other, and been thundered through the Halls of Congress, into the ears of the timid, and the undecided. And could Mr. Jefferson have had the audacious boldness then to have borrowed from such a paper and under such circumstances? We leave the reader to answer the question. But for the impeachment of Mr. Jefferson's veracity, we should have never deemed it necessary to have said a word upon the subject. For resistance to the purpose for which it is professedly introduced by the critic, viz. that of contesting Mr. Jefferson's claim to originality as the author of the Declaration of In-

* Vide Wirt's Life of Henry.

† Vide Mr. Adams' letter to Mr. Jefferson, announcing its discovery.

‡ Same letter.

dependence, we should have thought *one word* said, one word *too much*. His fame in this particular is as little likely to be affected by conviction of having borrowed the four phrases from the Mecklenburg committee, as Shakspeare's would be by the loss of a single canto of the Venus and Adonis, or Milton's by one of his Italian sonnets.

As to the resemblance between the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of Virginia, or "to speak more properly, the list of grievances prefixed to that instrument," we confess it is not at all wonderful, because, *indeed*, they both proceed from the same pen. And we must be permitted to say, that in nothing, is the noble daring, or the modest assurance of our reverend friend, more apparent than in this part of his article, where he undertakes to contradict the positive assertion of the biographer of Jefferson, upon the strength of the silliest and weakest presumption, upon which a disciple of Duns Scotus ever proceeded to form a conclusion. Mr. Tucker says, that while the convention in Virginia was engaged in framing a constitution, Mr. Jefferson, then in Philadelphia, prepared one with a preamble, containing a list of the grievances of the colonies, and sent it to his friend, Mr. Wythe. That the former one was not adopted for reasons which he states, but that the preamble (paper alluded to by the critic) was. In opposition to this positive statement of the biographer, the reverend gentleman presents this most sapient paragraph.

"On the 11th of August, 1775, Mr. Jefferson was elected
 "a delegate to Congress, for one year, by the convention of
 "Virginia, and on the 20th of June, 1776, was re-elected
 "for another year. The journals to which we have refer-
 "red, show us that George Wythe also was elected with Mr.
 "Jefferson, on both these occasions ; and as the list of mem-
 "bers in the Virginia convention presents us at one time
 "with the name of Mr. Edward Randolph, and at another, of

“Mr. Prentiss, sitting for Mr. Wythe, we *infer*, that in 1776, “ while the Virginia constitution was under consideration, “ Mr. Wythe *was in Philadelphia* with Mr. Jefferson, attending to his duties in Congress ; if *this be so*, we do “ not perceive how the list of grievances could have been “ transmitted to him in Virginia” ! He first takes it for granted, that the “ Wythe” alluded to by the biographer, could have been no other than the George Wythe here spoken of, (or if he admits the possibility of its being some other person, he allows it no weight in the argument,) when it might have been a half dozen others of the same name. Having settled this matter thus summarily, he now forsooth, from the fact of Mr. Wythe’s having been a member of both bodies at the same time, and of his having been occasionally represented in his absence from the convention of Virginia, by two of his friends, *assumes* that he *must have been* absent in Philadelphia at the time the Virginia convention was under consideration, and *therefore*, could not have received the preamble of Mr. Jefferson !! This is the kind of logic with which our political divine proceeds to overthrow the unqualified declaration of a gentleman ! This is the species of reasoning he deems more potent than fact ! This is the process by which he expects to erase the proud inscription of “ Author of the Declaration of Independence” from Mr. Jefferson’s tombstone, and to write deep in its stead, the epitaph of infamy ! It certainly cannot be necessary to offer a word in refutation of such miserable trash. When our pious critic will prove that it was the identical *George Wythe* then in Congress, to whom the biographer alludes, and when he will further prove that the said George Wythe was in Philadelphia at the time the alleged constitution and preamble were transmitted by Mr. Jefferson to Virginia, *then*, we will undertake to add something else to the evidence which his biographer has already afforded of his having been the author of the preamble, but not until *then*. We have now

done with the subject. We have followed the church journal critic through his course of detraction. We have endeavored to gather up all the venom which he has dropped by the way. He has wreaked all his malice, and has long since retired from the work of injury. His passions are, perhaps, cool by this time, and we hope he sees that in the heady current of his animosity, he has evinced a spirit inconsistent with justice, and unbecoming a professor of Christianity. We forbear saying aught more that can add to the bitterness of his reflections. We only beg that he will ponder well upon the following observations of a great man :

“Politics and the pulpit are terms that have but little agreement. No sound ought to be heard in the church save the healing voice of christian charity. The cause of civil liberty and civil government gains as little as that of religion by this confusion of duties. Those who quit it their proper character to assume what does not belong to them, are for the greater part ignorant both of the character they leave, and the character they assume. Wholly unacquainted with the world in which they are so fond of meddling, and inexperienced in all its affairs, on which they pronounce with so much confidence, they have nothing of politics but the passions they excite. Surely the church is a place where one day’s truce ought to be given to the dissensions and animosities of mankind.”*

Lest we may be thought to have expressed ourselves with unwarrantable harshness, we shall be pardoned, we hope, if before we conclude, we briefly and summarily call the attention of the reader to the life and public services of Mr. Jefferson, and the nature of the attack which has been made against him.

In 1767, when the spirit of the revolution first displayed itself, in the legislature of Virginia, in opposition to the

* Burke.

Taxation Bill, of the Colonial Governor, Jefferson, then a youth, and in the *first* year of his public life, took the bold step of signing a non-importation agreement, in company with Washington, Randolph, Henry, and Lee. In the same legislature, fifteen years before a voice had been raised in condemnation even of the *slave trade*, his great and humane mind went so far beyond the age, as to lead him to make a proposition for the gradual extinction of *domestic* slavery. In 1773, when public indignation was aroused by the removal of a citizen of Rhode Island to England for trial, and Virginia took a leading part among her sister states in the movements consequent upon the act—Jefferson took a leading part in Virginia; first suggested a committee of correspondence to communicate with the other colonies, and embodied his views in resolutions, and thus originated that great measure, the origin of all the others, the greatest, by universal acknowledgment, ever adopted by the colonies, and one, the glorious distinction of which has been the subject of rival claims by Massachusetts and Virginia. In 1774, when the Boston Port Bill spread the flame of discontent over the whole continent, and the idea of a general Congress was adopted, and delegates elected, it was Jefferson who drew up the instructions for those who were sent from Virginia—instructions which afterwards, printed under the title of “a summary view of the rights of British America,” produced an effect which was powerfully felt in England, as well as in the colonies. In 1775, he prepared the justly celebrated answer to the conciliatory propositions of the British government. Elected to the national convention in the same year, he was appointed a member of the committee to prepare a statement of the reasons for taking up arms, and drew up the report. In 1776, he drafted the Declaration of Independence. In 1777, he assisted in framing the municipal code of his native state, and was the author of the great fundamental and republican measures for abolishing entails — the law of promogeniture,

the preference of males over females—separating the church from state, establishing religious toleration, and founding primary schools, and the university. To him, more than any other man, are we indebted for the republican tendency which was given to the administration of this government during the period of the first presidency. For at a time when the great minds of Hamilton and Adams, looked with distrust upon our infant constitution, by *reason of its democratic character*, and the soul of Washington himself was clouded with doubts, Jefferson alone spoke with undoubting confidence, and looked forward with unshaken faith to the result of the great experiment. With the true prophetic glance of genius, he penetrated the future, and saw the great republic reposing safely beneath the shade of the institutions, then the object of such anxious solicitude. By the influence of his talents and character, in the cabinet of Washington, he may be said to have prevented this country from being plunged into a war with Great Britain, to gratify the mad enthusiasm of the friends of revolutionary France. He administered the government while President, with the most prosperous results, with the profoundest wisdom, and with the strictest accordance with true republican principles; acquired the vast and invaluable* territory of Louisiana, and kept his country in peace, and preserved its honor inviolate at a time when the whole civilized world echoed with the clang of arms.

It is this man—thus perilling his life and fortune in earliest youth, in defence of his country's rights, and afterwards devoting his whole life to her service—crowned in succession with all the highest honors that a grateful republic could confer—discharging with sacred fidelity all his social obligations—passing the evening of his days in philosophical thought—the oracle to whom men looked in every danger that threatened our infant government—the object of proud contemplation and affectionate interest to two continents, and sinking into

his grave with the accumulated and accumulating gratitude of millions—who has been dragged back before the world, and charged by the clergyman of the Church Journal, with vanity, egotism, uncharitableness, inhumanity, meanness, jealousy, fiend-like hate, hypocrisy, treachery, falsehood, cowardice, alms-begging, and infidelity. “Whose policy” he has stigmatized “as the cunning of selfishness,” and “whose friendship the treachery of deceit.” Between the assumption of whose nature, and that of one, whom he has described as possessing “a devil’s spirit linked to a brute’s propensities,” and as not having “enough of man left about him to make a christian out of,” he has said that one would long hesitate, if forced upon the hard alternative of choosing !*

As for the consequences to Mr. Jefferson’s reputation, we have but little fear. It is as safe from the effusions of clerical hate as the fixed star from the influence of earth’s noxious exhalations. The river of his fame is rolling rapidly on to posterity, and it is as idle for the clergyman of the Church Journal to attempt to break its stream, as it would be for him to stay Niagara in its course, and hurl back its waters. He has erected for himself a monument broader and more imperishable than the largest of Egypt’s kings. The Vandals of criticism cannot break it, nor stain its whiteness. It is in the hearts of millions of grateful people. His fame stands identified with the institutions of our country, and should they be destined to overshadow the earth, it will be cœextensive. The grandeur of his genius is for ever blended with the majesty of that period in the history of the human mind, when the great truth of man’s capacity for self government was first discovered. Bacon’s name is not more indissolubly connected with the emancipation of

* Vide an article from the same hand upon Davis’ Life of Burr, in the last number of the New-York Review.—pp. 10, 183, 213.

the human intellect from a false philosophy—Newton's with the great revelation in natural science—Columbus' with the discovery of this continent—than is that of Thomas Jefferson, with the proudest epoch in the history of human reason and human action. It stands, giving and taking light. We plead guilty to the charge of veneration for *his* memory, and that of our patriot forefathers. We watched them as they lingered upon earth, with a reverential respect, linked as they were with the history of the sublime past, and the hopes of a bright futurity. And when we heard of Jefferson, and Adams, and Monroe, descending to their graves, it was with something of the same feeling with which we may suppose the celebrated traveller,* after crossing the equator, saw those stars go down with which he had been familiar from his infancy. If there is any human heart that can take pleasure in soiling their fair fame, we thank God it has nothing in common with the one in our bosom. For our own part, we cherish the recollection of their greatness with something of the melancholy tenderness with which the lover dwells upon the virtues of his lost mistress. We love to believe them great. We love to look at them enshrouded in the glory of their great deeds, and our imagination would fain lend them additional splendor, to consecrate their memory. We love to gaze at them, shining like stars in the milky way of history, and should be sorry to have the brilliancy of one tarnished, or taken from the constellation.

* Humboldt.



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